OBSERVAT.

ON THE

PICTURES

NOW IN EXHIBITION

AT THE

ROYAL ACADEMY,

SPRING GARDENS,

And Mr. CHRISTIE's

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE

REMARKS ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

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OBSEVATIONS
ON THE
PICTURES
IN THE
EXHIBITIONS, 1771.

IN the preface to my *Remarks on the Engliſh Language* (which was written in the month of February laſt year) I have ventured to give my opinion of the merit of about twenty of our modern painters; and, as I am convinced I am not far from the truth in the judgment I have formed, ſhall here repeat what I have there ſaid of them: after which, I ſhall take notice of ſuch of the pictures in the three preſent exhibitions as I think moſt worthy of notice.

'Having gone from my principal ſubject, and rambled 'much, I ſhall now ramble on, and, as I have been always 'a lover of pictures, and have made the theory of painting 'in ſome meaſure my ſtudy, ſhall here ſet down my opinion 'in general of about a ſcore of ſuch of our modern artiſts as 'I conceive to be among the beſt, after premiſing that I form

'my notions of them from ſuch of their pictures only as 'have appeared in the public exhibitions, having never been 'at their houſes, and that I have no acquaintance with any 'of them, nor even any knowledge of their characters other-'wiſe than as painters, and conſequently may be ſuppoſed to 'ſpeak without prejudice. I ſhall mention them without 'any order, and juſt as they occur to my mind.

'We have no Engliſh painter now living, whoſe productions 'are more perfect in their kind than the moonlight ſea-pieces 'of *Swaine* of *Stretton-Ground, Weſtminſter*. I am ſorry to ob-'ſerve, by his pictures being all marked for ſale, that they are not 'in the requeſt they deſerve to be: for he is a much better 'painter than ſome, whom the diſtributers of prizes at the '*Arts-and-Sciences* have brought into high repute. This 'man's works will one day or another be in eſteem, when that 'eſteem (alas!) will be of no benefit to their author.

'* *Cotes* is undoubtedly our beſt painter in crayons, and 'one of our beſt in oil. In the pictures of children he ſuc-'ceeds better than Sir *Joſhua Reynolds*. Theſe children of 'his have a ſtriking and a moſt pleaſing nativeneſs.

'*Gainſborough* is one of our beſt portrait-painters.

'One of our beſt landſcape-painters is *Bond* of *Birmingham*. 'His pictures are well coloured and very pleaſing.

'Our

* *Cotes* is ſince dead.

'Our very beſt perhaps is *Marlow*. He has likewiſe a happy talent for painting buildings. But his water, If I recollect right, has but little truth, and is not tranſparent.

'For truth of colouring we have hardly any man that beats *Elmer* of *Farnham*. He ſeems likewiſe to be almoſt univerſal: the human face, fruit, dead fiſh, birds;——ſcarce any thing comes amiſs to him. At the ſame time, he works, to all appearance, with great facility: Indeed, I fear too much in a hurry; for his pencil is harſh, though it is light and free. Neither has he much idea either of compoſition or of clear-obſcure: and, though nature has given him a great deal of talent, he will never be a true painter till he has more patience to blend his colours, till he places his objects ſo as to pleaſe the eye, and gives more force and more harmony to his pictures by the means of light-and-ſhadow.

'The large candle-light piece exhibited ſome years ago by *Wright* of *Derby*, where an orrery was introduced, and for which one of our noblemen was ſaid to have given two hundred guineas, was but an indifferent picture, whatever encomiums were beſtowed upon it. There was no great truth in the colouring, and the pencilling was ſomewhat heavy. The two lamp-lights, that he exhibited laſt year, were much better. Perhaps he is improved ſince he painted the large picture. Perhaps too he has more talent for painting figures of a moderate ſize than for painting large ones. If ſo, he

'would

'would do well to confine himſelf to thoſe. Why ſhould a 'man be a bad painter when he may be a good one?

'After *Cotes*, our beſt painter in crayons, (and perhaps our 'only good one) is Miſs *Read*. She likewiſe paints very well 'in oil. Her pencilling is free and eaſy, and her colouring 'has a great deal of truth. There is a nativeneſs in her chil-'dren, as well as in *Cotes*'s; but leſs of it; and herein ſhe 'ſeems to be his imitator.

'*Paul Sanby*'s views are very good.

'The view from the gun-wharf at *Portſmouth*, exhibited 'laſt year by *Dominic Serres*, was an excellent picture; and 'the Engliſh man of war chaſing a French chebeck was little 'inferior, if any thing.

'*Mrs. Kauffman* has a very conſiderable talent for hiſtory-'painting. Her compoſitions are good: her taſte in drawing 'the human figure ſeems to be better than that of any other 'hiſtory-painter we have; and ſhe has a great ſhare of expreſ-'ſion. It would be happy if ſhe could get rid of a certain 'greyneſs of colouring, which gives a coldneſs to her pictures.

'I am apprehenſive, from their names, that the two pain-'ters laſt mentioned are foreigners. Were they natives of '*England*, they would do ſome honour to our nation.

'We

'We have ſome very tolerable painters in miniature: but 'the beſt in that way, beyond all compariſon, is *Humphry*. 'He is indeed an admirable one.

'I was in hopes ſome years ago, from *Collet's* four pictures 'of the courting a young lady, the carrying her off, and the 'two ſcenes after marriage, that we were going to have an 'excellent painter in the humorous ſtile. Thoſe pieces, 'though but indifferently coloured, were very good in regard 'to invention, and admirable for the juſtneſs of expreſſion 'in the countenances. But the hopes I then conceived are 'diſappointed. He has ſince fallen into all the ridiculous ex-'aggerations and the falſe humour of the worſt productions of '*Hogarth*, to whom, from the four pieces juſt mentioned, I 'expected to ſee him greatly ſuperior. His *teaching grown 'people to dance*, his *maſter kiſſing the ſervant-maid*, and others 'of the like kind, are contemptible. Uglineſs is falſe hu-'mour; and exceſſive exaggeration is the poor refuge of thoſe 'who want ſkill to repreſent things with propriety and juſt-'neſs. Let me adviſe this painter therefore to throw off this 'abſurd habit into which he is fallen, and, at the ſame time, 'to ſoften his pencil, and to endeavour at more truth in co-'louring and at the artifice of clear-obſcure. He is much miſ-'taken if he imagines, from the example of *Hogarth*, that 'theſe things are not as neceſſary in ludricrous paintings as in 'all others.

'If

'If *Italy* produces no more great hiſtory-painters, as is 'often affirmed, ſhe has ſtill however ſome excellent artiſts. 'Many of *Zuccarelli*'s pictures are incomparable. The two 'large ones he exhibited laſt year are worth any money.

'*Zoffanii* gives a tolerable likeneſs of our actors in particu-'lar ſcenes in comedy. But, though he at the ſame time re-'preſents not ill the ſuppoſed emotions of their minds, and 'though his pencil is free, there is often a frigidity in his 'countenances, that is very unpleaſing. In *ſome* of theſe 'countenances this frigidity is exceſſive: Witneſs, for *one* 'inſtance, *Beard* ſinging in one of the ſcenes in *Love in a* '*Village*.

'This painter makes uſe of a certain artifice, againſt which 'I would caution all of the profeſſion. In order to preſerve 'in his pictures an *union* of colour, which is a thing neceſſary, 'he exhibits an *unity*, a *oneneſs* of colour; which is diſagree-'able to the eye, as well as very unnatural. We have 'likewiſe landſcape-painters, who, to preſerve this union, 'make every object green, that enters into the compoſition of 'their pictures.

'This oneneſs of colour is the refuge of men who are not 'maſters of their art in reſpect to colouring, and yet are con-'ſcious that all jarring of colours is to be avoided: and true 'it is that a man of little judgment, that were to introduce

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'into a picture many different and ſtrong colours, would al-
'moſt certainly make that picture diſagreeable by a glare and
'a gaudineſs void of all harmony. But the greateſt coloriſts
'(ſuch as *Titian*, *Rubens*, *Vandyke*, and a few others of the
'*Venetian* and *Flemiſh* Schools) by their knowledge of the
'agreement or diſagreement of different colours with each
'other, have been able to introduce into their pictures many
'ſtrong and lively colours, that give thoſe pictures a ſtriking-
'neſs and a vigour, and at the ſame time to preſerve all the
'harmony and ſuavity that are neceſſary.

'The picture exhibited laſt year by *Penny*, repreſenting a
'ſmith hearkening to a piece of news related by a taylor, (of
'which the hint is taken from *Shakeſpear*) is an exceeding good
'one, and much ſuperior to the productions of a *Hogarth*.
'The figures are correctly drawn; the picture is well coloured,
'and has a very tolerable effect in regard to light-and-ſha-
'dowand the expreſſions in the countenances are ſtrong with-
'out any unnatural diſtortion of features, and are exceedingly
'juſt. Two of theſe countenances are, however, exception-
'able. That of the taylor is very much ſo. The painter has
'made this face diſguſtingly ugly, and there is no looking at it
'without pain. Uglineſs (as I ſaid before) is falſe humour.
'He might have given his taylor all the nincompoop character
'that we commonly aſcribe to taylors, (though, by the way I
'know no reaſon for our aſcribing that character to them) with-
'out making him at all ugly. The ſmith likewiſe in his ſurprize

'opens

'open his eyes ſo as to diſcover the whole iris; which gives a 'ghaſtlineſs to his countenance. The painter might have 'contrived an equally ſtrong expreſſion of ſurpriſe, that ſhould 'not at all have ſhocked the ſpectator.

'Mrs. *Moſer*'s flower-piece in oil of laſt year is a capital 'performance, and that in water colours a very good one.

'*Mortimer*'s converſation-pieces have a great deal of merit.

'To judge by what he has exhibited for two or three years 'paſt, I ſhould imagine *Stubbs* to be rather degenerating than 'improving: and yet, though many of his pictures of horſes 'have been deſervedly admired, there was ſtill great room for 'improvement. A painter, that introduces many horſes into 'a picture, has an eaſy opportunity, by a judicious choice of 'different colours for thoſe horſes, of giving his picture a con-'ſiderable effect in regard to clear-obſcure. *Stubbs* never 'availed himſelf of this. I think too that the ſilky pencil he 'has gives theſe animals an unnatural appearance; and I like-'wiſe apprehend that he was always apt to give his mares ra-'ther too thin and ſtringy a countenance; by means of which 'they had ſomewhat of the air of ſtone-horſes. It may further 'be ſaid that, though his horſes are not ill coloured, they are 'far from having the truth of colouring or the roundneſs that 'we ſee in many of *Woverman*'s. In ſhort, they had always a 'ſmall matter of the coloured print: and this I take to be ow-

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'ing in ſome degree to his not laying a thicker body of colour 'where the ſtrength of the light falls than in other parts.

'We are obliged to Sir *Joſhua Reynolds* for having put an 'end to the ſtiffneſs and the ſameneſs of attitude there was in 'our Engliſh portraits before he appeared. He has not only 'an infinitely greater variety of natural, graceful and pictur-'eſque attitudes than any Engliſh painter that preceded him, 'but even a much greater, in my opinion, than any foreign 'painter whatſoever. But I am ſorry to obſerve that, though 'he never was a firſt-rate painter in regard to colouring, he is 'degenerated, in this particular, and not a little, within 'theſe ſeven years, as he is likewiſe in his pencilling. Several 'of the pictures he has exhibited have had but a very ſmall 'ſhare of merit. We may reaſonably attribute this to his 'having too much buſineſs. There has been always a conſi-'derable effect of clear-obſcure in his pictures, and they have 'ſeldom failed to catch the eye. Yet at the ſame time there 'has been a certain confuſion in them, and it has frequently 'happened that his objects have not detached themſelves well 'from each other. One cauſe of this is a very odd and bad 'method that he has of painting clouds. Theſe clouds of his 'have ſomething of the appearance of ſmoke, and, inſtead of 'being at a diſtance in the ſky, they ſeem to advance and to 'mix themſelves with the near objects in the picture. Herein 'ſome other painters have been ſo weak as to imitate him. 'Many of his hands likewiſe, where there has been any fore-

' ſhortening, have been drawn in a lame unnatural manner.
' *Some* of them are *very* bad.

' *Weſt* has a great deal of true genius, and, conſidering he
' is yet but a young fellow, bids fair to be a much greater hiſ-
' tory-painter than *England* has ever yet bred. He viſibly
' aims at excelling in all the parts of painting, compoſition,
' drawing, local colour, clear-obſcure, and expreſſion. There
' is a fire in his large compoſitions, and great expreſſion of the
' paſſions in many of his countenances: but his drawing is not
' ſo elegant, nor his local colour ſo true as might be wiſhed.
' He ſucceeds much better in figures of a moderate ſize than
' in large ones. In the firſt his pencilling is commonly free
' and maſterly, though not mellow. His hair, in particular
' is ſometimes inſufferably harſh, and gives one the idea of caſt
' iron rubbed over with paint. Some of his large figures,
' beſides their not being well pencill'd, are drawn in very bad
' taſte. That of *Jupiter*, where he approaches *Semele*, is
' ſhockingly mean and contemptible, and, even if the picture
' were an excellent one in other reſpects, which it is not,
' would, as being a principal figure, utterly ſpoil it. Perhaps
' the advice hinted to *Wright* of *Derby* would not be impro-
' per for this painter, and it might be beſt for him not to at-
' tempt large figures.

' His picture of *Regulus* departing from *Rome*, exhibited laſt
' year, is admirable for the animatedneſs of the compoſition,

' and

'and the force and juſtneſs of many of the expreſſions, and, 'though faulty in ſome particulars, is a performance not un- 'worthy of any of the greateſt painters that have been.

'Though I flatter myſelf theſe reflections are all juſt, I am 'conſcious they are far from being all the juſt reflections that 'might be made upon the works of theſe painters. I make 'them merely upon recollection, having never till now com- 'mitted any thing to paper upon the ſubject, or had any in- 'tention of ever doing it: and many other obſervations 'might, without doubt, be made upon theſe performances, 'were a man to ſtudy them.

ROYAL ACADEMY,

EXHIBITION, 1771.

209. THE picture of the greateſt merit in the preſent exhibition at the academy, is a large hiſtory-piece, by *Weſt: Hannibal brought, when but nine years old, by his father Halmilchar, to the altar of Jupiter; where he ſwears eternal enmity to the Romans.*

This is a performance, of which the compoſition, and the ſtrength and juſtneſs of the expreſſions, muſt ſtrike all perſons of ſenſe, whether they are acquainted with pictures or not. It is likewiſe executed with a very maſterly hand; and perhaps may be reckoned among the beſt pictures in the world. I would, however, recommend to the painter's conſideration one of Du Freſnoy's remarks, viz. that thoſe figures, which are placed behind others, have no grace, unleſs the expreſſion of the hands accompany that of the face. Neither do I think he has given Hannibal ſo martial a look as he ought to have done. 'Tis true Hannibal was not yet a ſoldier when he took this oath: yet, to judge from his character, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe there was always a certain intrepidity and manlineſs in his countenance.

210. The

210. The death of General Wolfe is likewiſe a well-compoſed picture, and admirable for the expreſſions; and has a conſiderable effect in regard to clear obſcure, notwithſtanding the dreſſes of the officers give it ſomething of a motley appearance.

All the other hiſtorical pieces by the ſame hand have merit in regard to expreſſion: but the ſmall ones have a diſagreeable dryneſs of pencil, and very little truth of colouring: and in that where the figures are largeſt, viz. the diſcovery of Moſes in the bulruſhes, the pencilling is a little heavy.

This painter is now and then careleſs in his drawing. Some of his ſide-faces are unnaturally narrow: and Pharoah's daughter, in the piece laſt mentioned, ſeems to have her forehead and the upper part of her head cruſhed.

217. His picture of the lady and her child is a bad one. The pencilling is dry; and the colouring raw, with very little truth. Yet the picture of the ſame lady and the ſame child of laſt year was an exceedingly good one.

I have ſaid, in the preface mentioned above, that Sir Joſhua Reynolds is degenerated both in colouring and pencilling. But I have attributed this to his having too much buſineſs, and not to loſs of ſkill: and one of his pictures of this year convinces

vinces me that I was right. (159) The old man, a half-length, is at leaſt equal (I think it indeed ſuperior) to any other picture I ever ſaw of his doing; and may be called a firſt-rate performance. The pillar is, however, too yellow. I allow it to be often neceſſary in painting to give an object more of this hue than the ſame object has in nature, and that a proper mellowneſs could not otherwiſe be preſerved. But in this pillar the yellowneſs is carried to an exceſs.

I am glad to find that Sir Joſhua has left off the ſtrange and bad manner of painting clouds, of which I have complained. His ſkies of laſt year and of this are very good: and I am not certain that he did not correct himſelf ſooner.

His other pictures in the preſent exhibition carry marks of the hurry in which he paints, and have no very extraordinary merit, though enough for a judicious eye to perceive that he could do much better, if he would. The beſt done of them is the gentleman's head. (160)

157. The nymph is but a poorly drawn figure. The ſhoulders are too narrow; the body and arms too ſmall: and the face has too much the air of a portrait.

156. The poſture of the Venus is diſagreeable. She has the appearance of a body and head, without legs or thighs. Her countenance wants dignity; and ſhe is drawn too young.

She

She looks more like the ſiſter of Cupid than like his mother: and one would imagine the painter had drawn her from ſome girl in low life of thirteen or fourteen years of age.

I have praiſed Sir Joſhua Reynolds for his great variety of natural, graceful, and pictureſque attitudes. Yet I am ſometimes afraid that herein he is almoſt at his *ne plus ultra*. By many of the prints taken from his works of late, he ſeems in his attitudes, to aim more at oddneſs than at grace or nature.

After Sir Joſhua Reynolds, Gainſborough ſeems to be the beſt portrait-painter we have. His five whole-lengths in this exhibition are very good. That of the lady in the fancied dreſs is particularly graceful. This lady, who has ſomething of a French look, has a remarkably piercing eye, and ſenſible and polite countenance.

The picture of the gentleman with the horſe ſeems to be its companion. Though this piece be very well done, it is liable to one objection. Every picture ought to have ſome principal object. But this picture has none. The horſe, being repreſented as near to the ſpectator as the gentleman, and being a large object, and of a light colour, attracts the eye as much as the gentleman does. The eye is equally divided between them: and it is to be feared that ſuch people as affect to be witty, will ſay the horſe is as good a man as his maſter.

79, 80. The

79, 80. The two large landſcapes by this painter are very good. They are executed with a maſterly hand, and in an excellent *gout* of colouring.

I fear I muſt retract a part of the commendation I have given Mrs. Kauffman. Her exhibitions of laſt year and of this don't quite anſwer the expectations I formed of her in the year ſixty-nine. Two of the beſt of her pictures in the preſent exhibition are the interview (113) of King Edgar with Elfrida, after her marriage with Athelwold; and (116) Erminia finding Tancred wounded, and aſſiſting in his relief.

I dont greatly admire this lady's choice of ſubjects. Points of hiſtory that are little known, (as are thoſe of the Engliſh hiſtory before the conqueſt) and events related in romances (which we always look upon as fiction, how well ſoever they are repreſented,) ſeldom intereſt the ſpectator much.

I have often wondered that the following circumſtance in the Roman hiſtory, a very grave and awful one, ſhould not have been treated in painting, (for I dont remember to have ſeen it) and particularly that it ſhould have eſcaped Pouſſin, to whoſe character of genius it ſeems to be perfectly ſuited.

Caius Marius, after having been long at the head of the Roman common-wealth, and been ſix times conſul, was forced to flee before the more fortunate Sylla. Having eſcaped many

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and moſt imminent dangers, he landed in Africa, on the very ſpot where lately had ſtood the city of Carthage, the rival of Rome. But he had ſcarcely ſet foot on ſhore, when an officer arrived from Sextilius the pretor, commanding his immediate departure: for that otherwiſe the decree of the ſenate muſt be put in execution, and he be declared an enemy to the Romans. Hereat he was for ſome time dumb with grief and amazement: looking ſternly on the meſſenger, who required his anſwer. At length, with a deep ſigh, *go tell the pretor*, ſaid he, *that thou haſt ſeen the exiled Marius ſitting on the ruins of Carthage:* by this expreſſive image placing, ſays Plutarch, in a ſtrong light the fortune of that celebrated city, and his own, as terrible examples of the inſtability of human affairs.

183. The ſea-engagement by moon-light, by Dominic Serres, is but a bad picture. The fleet ſailing out of the downs, (181) and the Royal George returning from the bay, (182) are good, though not equal to thoſe two of his doing which I have commended, and which were exhibited in ſixty-nine.

179. The view of the river and of the tower of London, by Scott, is an admirable picture. The buildings, and the water more eſpecially, are incomparably well done. If the ſky were equal to them, the picture would be almoſt beyond price.

I am not acquainted with this painter's name; and it ſeems very extraordinary that the firſt performance a man exhibits ſhould be a maſterpiece; which this certainly is.

133. I have ſaid that Mrs. Moſer's flower-piece in oil of the year ſixty-nine is capital. I ſay the ſame of that of laſt year; and believe I may ſay it of that which ſhe exhibits now; though I think this ſomething inferior to the other two. It is more highly finiſhed; but not painted with quite ſo much freedom.

In the ſmall picture of the Royal Family, exhibited laſt year by Zoffanii, there was nothing of that oneneſs of colour, with which I have reproached him. Nor was there in either of the faces *there*, or in either of thoſe of the ſcene in the Alchymiſt, exhibited at the ſame time, any thing of that frigidity, that I have mentioned. The pictures are both very good; and eſpecially that of the Royal Family.

What he exhibits this year has much leſs merit. (230, 231) The portrait of his majeſty, and that of the young gentleman, though tolerable performances, ſhew no extraordinary ſkill. We may therefore ſuppoſe this painter to have leſs talent for figures as large as the life than for ſmall ones. In the firſt mentioned of theſe two, the poſture, though it might do well enough for the picture of a country-ſquire, is not quite ſuited, I think, to the dignity of the perſon repreſented.

232. The ſmall picture of the beggars is better done. But it has ſomething of that oneneſs of colour I have ſpoken of, and repreſents diſagreeable objects. I have ſaid that the repreſentation of uglineſs is falſe humour: and I ſay the ſame of the repreſentation of rags and naſtineſs. Not but that low, even *very* low, ſubjects may be entertaining. But the entertainment they afford will never proceed from uglineſs or filth. What

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turns the ſtomach, when we ſee it in nature, will have the ſame effect, when we ſee it repreſented in painting.

233. The Holy Family, exhibited this year by Zuccarelli, is a good picture, though not equal to ſome of the pieces in his former exhibitions. The angels are very pictureſque. There is a conſiderable fault in the Virgin's face. The upper part of it is too narrow: ſo that her eyes are placed too near her noſe. And this gives her a weak look. The forehead of St. John is not ſufficiently in a line with the reſt of his face; and he ſeems to want a part of his ſkull.

Such obſervations as theſe may not perhaps intereſt the generality of ſpectators, of whom the greateſt part never deſcend into minuties in looking at a picture, and not a few go to theſe exhibitions only for the ſake of ſaying they have been there. But I make them, as ſuppoſing my remarks may fall into the hands of many of the performers, and may contribute in ſome degree their being more cautious in their future productions.

There is much of the taſte and manner of great painters in (153) the portrait of a gentleman, (a half length) by Peters, though the tints of the fleſh are too general for the author to be called an artiſt of the firſt rank. If he is young, he will, in all probability, make a conſiderable figure in time.

If Allen likewiſe be young (as I ſuppoſe him to be, by his being at Rome) he ſeems to promiſe well. His *Cleopatra weeping over the aſhes of Mark Anthony* is but a dull picture: but his *Pompey accoſted by Cratippus* has a great deal of expreſſion.

162. The view in St. James's Park before the alteration, by Richards, is an exceedingly well-done picture: as is likewiſe (166.) that of Merton-College in Oxford, by Rooker. (167, 168.) His two other views, Liliſhall-Abbey and part of Wenlock-Abbey, are good, though leſs pleaſing.

235. Another of thoſe views, which ſtruck me moſt, is that of Jvy-Bridge in Devonſhire, an honorary exhibition, by C. W. Bamfylde, Eſq.

271. The view of Black-friars-bridge (198.) and that of a grove in Somerſetſhire, both by Tomkins, (266.) and a landſcape by Mullins, are all well done.

82, 83, 84. Three views of Garvey's are likewiſe good.

Other views and landſcapes in this exhibition may probably have their merit, though I did not mark them.

I find, in examining my catalogue, that there are two views and two landſcapes by Paul Sandby, whom I have commended above. Their being in water-colours was perhaps the reaſon of my over-looking them: for I have never much admired that ſpecies of painting. But I make no doubt of their being good performances.

177. The portrait of a young lady by Sanders, (102) and that of a ſtudent by Hone, are well coloured.

13. One of the beſt pictures in crayons in this exhibition is the *Venus embracing Cupid*, by Bartolozzi, 221.

65. Among

65. Among thoſe in miniature I was moſt ſtruck with a young lady by Mrs. Denham., (8.) A lady by Barber, (124.) Another by Kitchingman, (180.) and a gentleman by Scouler.

SPRING GARDENS EXHIBITION, 1771.

I Know not how I came to forget Pine of St. Martin's Lane, when I gave my opinion laſt year of ſuch as I looked upon to be our principal performers: for he is certainly one of the beſt portrait-painters we have.

He has but one picture in this exhibition. It repreſents a circumſtance in the Engliſh Hiſtory, viz. the Earl of Warren making reply to the writ called *Quo Warranto*, in the reign of Edward the firſt. (121.)

The king, in order to raiſe money, publiſhed a proclamation, enjoining all perſons, who held lands of the crown, to lay their titles before the judges; and many, who could not produce their original titles, though they proved a long poſſeſſion, were obliged to pay large ſums to preſerve their eſtates. The Earl of Warren, appearing before the judges, was required to ſhew the fundamental title, by virtue of which he held his lands. He anſwered by drawing an old ruſty ſword, and ſaying, *This is the inſtrument, by which my anceſtors gained their eſtate; and by this I will keep it as long as I live.* This bold reply had a happy effect, and induced the king, who apprehended he might find many powerful men in the ſame diſpoſition, to revoke his proclamation.

I don't greatly admire this picture: and yet I confeſs there is merit in it. It is painted in a tolerable gout of colour, and with a free hand; and the expreſſions are ſtrong: but I can't think them judicious. The earl is but a low character, and has more the appearance of a prize-fighter than of a nobleman. Inſtead of ſhewing a cool and determined reſolution accompanied with dignity, he is in ſo violent a rage that one would think he were going to cut the judge and all his clerks piecemeal. And indeed it is not certain that they don't deſerve it: for they look ſomething like dealers in the black art: eſpecially the judge himſelf, whoſe countenance is not far from the *diabolical.* In ſhort, though the picture ſhews its author to have a great deal of mechanical ſkill, it is not a truly judicious performance, the ſubject, which is ſerious being treated in too burleſque a manner.

98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103. Marlow's landſcapes and views are excellently well done. His colouring is indiſputably better than that of any other landſcape painter we have. His pencil is free and maſterly, expreſſing a great deal with but little work. His buildings too are admirably well painted; and he wants nothing to make his pictures compleatly executed, but to give his water tranſparency, and ſo to contrive his ſkies as to produce more effect in regard to clear-obſcure.

43. Gulliver taking his final leave of his maſter the ſorrel nag and the lord of the houhynhms, by Gilpin, is an extremely well executed picture; and the gout of colouring very good. But the ſubject is ſo abſurd that the ſkill of the painter may almoſt be ſaid to be thrown away.

We are to ſuppoſe the horſes it repreſents to have a degree of reaſon equal to that of the human ſpecies. But who can poſſibly ſuppoſe any ſuch thing? Being uſed to conſider horſes as animals of little underſtanding, compared to that of men, we ſhall always look upon creatures in the ſhape of horſes in the ſame light; and it will be impoſſible for any ſpectator to view them in another. 44, 45.

44, 45. The ſtud of the late Duke of Cumberland, and a picture of deer, (both by the ſame painter) are excellently well done. I think, however, it would be well, if the painter could blend his colours a little more, without loſing the ſpiritedneſs of his pencil. The landſcape-part of the firſt of theſe two pictures is by Marlow, and is executed with his uſual ſkill.

156. The picture of the famous horſe Eclipſe, by Stubbs, is an exceedingly good one.

155. That of the horſe and lion, in enamel, is much admired, as highly finiſhed things commonly are, whether they really deſerve it or not. It has undoubtedly its merit; and there is a great deal of expreſſion in the frightened horſe. As to the lion, the painter has given him in my opinion, too much of the human countenance, and too great a flyneſs. I likewiſe think the hinder-part of the horſe too ſmall for the forepart.

153, 154. The lion and lioneſs, and the lioneſs and tyger (both by the ſame painter) are very bad pictures. The lion has ſomething the appearance of a hedge-hog; and the lioneſſes and tiger have the countenances of baboons. One would really imagine the painter had never ſeen any animals of theſe ſpecies. Neither is there any merit of colouring in theſe pictures, or any boldneſs and maſterlineſs of pencil. It is amazing that a man, who has certainly a great deal of ſkill, and is an excellent painter in another way, ſhould mis-ſpend his time upon things, for which he has no talent. And yet, without doubt, he finds people weak enough to buy them; and perhaps at any price he is pleaſed to fix.

His large picture, of laſt year, of the lion devouring a deer, was likewiſe a very bad one in almoſt every reſpect.

201, 202. The blackſmith's ſhop by night, where all the light is given by the fire, by Wright of Derby, has a great deal of truth of colouring, and is painted freely. It is better than the ſmall picture of the ſame ſubject, where the objects are very ugly.

This

This painter, with a conſiderable ſhare of ſkill, is deficient in taſte.

He ſeems to delight in uglineſs and confuſion: witneſs the laſt of the blackſmiths ſhops juſt mentioned; (206) the old woman knitting by candle-light, the leanneſs and uglineſs of whoſe hands and arms make one ſhudder; and the Alchymiſt's laboratory, (207) where there is a moſt diſagreeable confuſion of unintereſting objects.

'Tis to no purpoſe to anſwer that ſuch things frequently occur in nature. All the ſcenes that nature preſents are not to be imitated. As I have already ſaid, whatever is diſagreeable and loathſome in nature, will be ſo, when repreſented in a picture. This woman might have been drawn as old as he has made her, without being ugly. We frequently ſee old people, in the ſight of whom there is nothing at all ſhocking. Nay, there are many of them whom we look at with a veneration that is very pleaſing, and with which the circumſtance of their age alone inſpires us. With regard to the Alchymiſt's laboratory, it may be obſerved, that, if a painter have a great number of unintereſting objects to repreſent in a picture, they may be ſo diſpoſed, as for the whole (the *tout-enſemble*, as the French call it) to be not only not diſagreeable, but even pleaſing to the eye. Where a painter has not the talent of ſo diſpoſing them, he ought to avoid the ſubject.

205. The face of the young lady undreſſing by candle-light, is another proof how little care this painter takes to make his objects agreeable to the eye. I preſume this is not a portrait; for young ladies (at leaſt, *modeſt* young ladies) are ſeldom repreſented in their pictures almoſt naked, and going to bed. The painter therefore might, with very little more care on *his* part, have made her face much handſomer, and conſequently have given the ſpectator much more pleaſure. But perhaps he was afraid of exciting wicked thoughts in *ſome* ſpectators, if he made a young lady half naked too handſome.

Another fault in this face is, that it wants union of colour.

5. One of the beſt portraits in this exhibition, is that of an officer, by Barron, a whole length.

39. The lady and her ſon, in one piece, by Falconet, are well painted: but the lady is made too ſleepy; and the boy is too big to be fondled in that manner, like a baby.

198, 199. The family, and the nobleman, ſmall whole-lengths, by Walton, are extremely well done. The colouring is natural; and they are painted freely; and there is a great appearance of reſemblance in the faces. The painter wants only to give his pictures more effect in regard to clear-obſcure.

189. The moon-light piece, by Wright of Pimlico, is a very good picture; and would be a very excellent one, if the clouds were not ſomething heavy.

67. A ſmall land-ſtorm, by Jones, and thoſe of Farington's land-ſcapes, which are numbered 34 and 35, are, next to Marlow's, three of the beſt landſcapes in this exhibition. Of theſe three, No. 34 has the leaſt merit.

Mortimer ſeems to paint with freedom; and moſt of his figures, conſidered ſingly, are well done. But I can't admire either his compoſitions, or his choice of ſubjects.

85. The picture repreſenting Moody in the character of Major O'Flaherty, and Parſons in thecharacter of the lawyer, is inſipid from it's ſubject; and that of Sextus applying to Erictho, (84) to know the event of the battle of Pharſalia, is horrid. So hideous an object as Erictho is not to be painted.

His two pictures of the pirates are better, yet have nothing in them very intereſting.

I can't help thinking, that this painter would ſhine more, if he made it his buſineſs to paint whole-length portraits; and eſpecially, if he would endeavour to give his pictures a greater effect of clear-obſcure.

134, 135. The two portraits by Miſs Read, whom I look upon as our beſt painter in crayons, now Cotes is dead, are, perhaps, ſuperior to any other pictures in crayons in theſe exhibitions; but they are inferior to ſome of her former productions.

60, 62. The two miniature portraits of ladies, by Humphry, are admirably well done. They are, perhaps, equal in merit, with regard to the painter's ſkill; but the beauty, grace and modeſty of the lady in the picture numbered 62, muſt particularly attach the eyes of all beholders; at leaſt, of all *male* beholders. Many of her *own* ſex will, perhaps, ſee nothing engaging in her.

It is an obſervation of my Lord Bacon's, that there never is any great beauty where there is not ſome diſproportion; and I have ſeveral times heard the ſame obſervation made in company. But I deny the truth of the aſſertion; and, to prove it a falſe one, I appeal to this lady's face, where there is great beauty without diſproportion; at leaſt, without what theſe people *mean* by the word *diſproportion*. There might, perhaps, be found ſome ſmall diſproportion, if one were to examine the face narrowly. But theſe people mean a very apparent and *ſtriking* diſproportion; and that this diſproportion is the very cauſe of the beauty. If their aſſertion were true, there could be no ſuch thing as perfect beauty; for *perfect beauty with diſproportion* is a contradiction. I am, indeed, willing to allow that there is no perfect beauty to be found But it is not the leſs poſſible for its not actually exiſting: and it is a thing that we may very well conceive, though we don't find it.

61. The portrait of the gentleman, by Humphry, is very good, but not equal to thoſe of the ladies. It is well coloured, but leſs mellow than the other two.

I have given it as my opinion above that Humphry is beyond all compariſon the beſt of our painters in miniature. But I am now glad to ſee that we have another, who in ſome meaſure rivals him. (114) The portrait of a gentleman, by Nixon, is an exceedingly good picture; (113) and the philoſopher's head, if it does not equal the *very beſt* of Humphry's, is at leaſt ſuperior to *ſome* of them. It is indeed a moſt excellent performance.

279, 280.

279, 280, 281. Of the drawings in this exhibition I was moſt ſtruck by the three firſt of Mayor's, repreſenting New-palace Yard, Old-palace Yard, and Begham-Abbey in ſuſſex.

EXHIBITION

Near CUMBERLAND HOUSE, 1771.

THIS is by far the leaſt ſhining of the three exhibitions, and will be ſoon diſpatched.

The greateſt ornament to it are the works of Elmer of Farnham, whom I have declared above to have very conſiderable talents from nature. What he exhibits this year is ſuperior to any thing he has produced before; and I cannot help lamenting that ſuch a man ſhould be buried in a little country-town, where in all probability he ſees nothing to improve his taſte, and converſes with no body, that can give him advice, by which he may profit. His talents for colouring are amazing; and, with a very poſſible improvement in the diſpoſition of his objects and in clear-obſure, his pictures of fruit and thoſe of dead game would be moſt capital performances. Good God! Why have not I the means of drawing this man from obſcurity, and making him the painter that he is capable of becoming? I know myſelf very little, if I ſhould not do it, were it in my power.

Three of the beſt pictures he now exhibits are the hare, numbered (80) the jay, king-fiſher and bull-finch, (84) and the fruit piece, (86). But ſeveral others are extremely well done. His grapes are bad. Of his human figures, I think the boy with young birds the beſt.

Though there is great truth of colouring in his faces, his tints are too general; and in his hands they are ſtill more ſo. He likewiſe ſeems too fond of painting diſagreeable people.

The

The landſcape numbered (66) by Dodd, is well painted. The figures are very well touched; and thoſe in (67) by the ſame painter ſtill better.

The trees, of which the landſcape number (264) by Waldegrave, is full, are very well done.

274. The ſhip breaming in a ſea port by moonlight, (276) and the ſhipwreck, both by Wilkins, are good pictures.

Of the landſcapes by Smith of Chicheſter, the two beſt are the ſnow-pieces. (229, 231) But they are not painted with a ſpirited pencil.

There is the ſame defect in the laſt of thoſe two landſcapes by Lambert of Lewes, which are numbered (150) But the picture is very naturally coloured; the water excepted, which is very bad.

55. There is ſpirit and expreſſion in the City-Syrens by Collet: but, withal, a diſagreeable confuſion in the compoſition.

This painter ſeems to think that pictures repreſenting ludicrous ſcenes may be compoſed any how: and poſſibly he may quote the example of Hogarth. But he is miſtaken. It is as neceſſary that a ludicrous picture, conſidered as *one object*, ſhould pleaſe the eye as that any other picture ſhould do it.

I find, in looking over my catalogue, that there are at the Academy three views by Wilſon. 'Tis moſt probable they are good: and I wonder I did not obſerve them; for he is undoubtedly one of the beſt landſcape-painters we have. In *compoſition* perhaps he may be ſaid to be the firſt.

I have ſpoken of Scott as one that I never heard before. But I recollect now that there was many years ago a painter of that name in great reputation for ſea-pieces: and this probably is he.

I have

I have highly commended the moon-light pieces of Swaine of Stretton-ground, Weſtminſter: but was apprehenſive, as I have ſaid, from their being all marked for ſale, that they were not in the requeſt they deſerved to be. I perceive he has four pictures in the preſent exhibition near Cumberland-houſe: but no moon-lights among them. I did not obſerve theſe four pictures when I was there. If it be as I ſuſpect, for want of encouragement, that he has left off painting moon-lights, he is a moſt deplorable inſtance of neglected merit: for thoſe pieces of his were capital. We have no painter in England that can equal them; and but one [Wright of Pimilico] who can do any thing that comes near them.

FINIS.

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